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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Tuesday, February 2, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The mailbag this week as usual reports innumerable problems, but the most serious seem to be spots and stains. In fact, judging from the number of questions on the subject coming from far and near, I should guess that this was National Spot Week. Listeners report a variety of spots ranging all the way from glue on a Sunday-go-to-meeting frock to lipstick on towels and mud on rompers.

Before we take up these various stains and the special treatment for each, I want to repeat one of the great truths of stain removal. Briefly, this truth is: "The sooner the better." (The sooner you treat the stain, the better it will come out.) Left to dry and set, many a stain becomes dreadfully stubborn, much more difficult to remove successfully.

Which brings up another truth, which is: "In order to take out the stain promptly, you have to have the right equipment on hand." You need also directions for dealing with different kinds of stains. So every smart housewife has a little drawer or little shelf where she keeps a few bottles holding the most important stain-removal fluids as well as pads, cloths, bowls, blotting paper and other equipment for treating stains. And on this same little shelf, she keeps a bulletin of directions for stain removal. Several State colleges -- most State colleges, I might say, now issue leaflets on stain removal. You can usually get a copy just by writing your State clothing specialist. Or you can write to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C., for their old reliable Farmers' Bulletin 1474 which deals with stains in a masterly and alphabetical order. (A is for acids and alkalis, too; B is for butter and aniline blue. And so on. If you don't forget your alphabet in the emergency, you won't have any trouble finding directions in this Government bulletin.) And you won't have any trouble getting a copy of this bulletin as long as the free supply lasts. Just write to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, D. C., and ask for "Stain Removal from Fabrics", No. 1474.

Now about that dress, that best dress which unfortunately ran into the glue-pot. Turning to the letter G in my bulletin, I find these remarks about removing glue. "Glue is soluble in water, but if it has become thoroughly dried, long soaking is necessary before it becomes soft enough to dissolve completely. Use one of the following materials in removing glue spots. First, water. If the material is washable, soak the spot in warm water. Occasionally it is necessary to boil the stained material. Second, acetic acid. Sponge the spot with dilute acid using absorbents such as clean blotters or a pad of soft cloth. White vinegar may be used instead of the acid but is not always so satisfactory."

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What to do about some mud spots on Junior's trousers. Look up "mud" in the bulletin. There you'll find 4 answers to mud problems. I'll quote just what the bulletin says: "Allow mud stains to dry and brush carefully before any other treatment is used. Sometimes nothing else is needed. The following treatments are satisfactory: First, soap and water. If fabric is washable, use soap and water. Second, wood or denatured alcohol. Sponge the stains with alcohol. Third, water. Sponge the stains with plain water. Fourth, cut raw potato. This strange-sounding treatment is only for black silks of smooth firm weave. For such material, brush off all the mud possible and then rub the spot with a cut raw potato. When dry, rub off the thin film of starch the potato leaves and the mud along with it."

Once in a while very red mud contains considerable iron and this iron causes what seems to be a very stubborn stain. In this case, you remove all the mud possible and then treat the stain that remains like a rust stain.

One stain mentioned in today's mailbag is not mentioned in the bulletin. This is lipstick. Some lipstick comes out easily in the wash. But many of these red preparations will be set permanently if they come in contact with soap. This is because many of them are a mixture of iron oxide and some fat or oil. The iron oxide gives the red color and becomes indelible on contact with any alkali, such as soap and ammonia. So for safety better not put clothes stained this way in the laundry until you have treated the stain. Sometimes all you need to do is to sponge the place with a good grease solvent like carbon tetrachloride. But if the stain is stubborn, lubricate it with a colorless grease of some kind. The cleaners often use white petroleum jelly for this purpose. Lubricate the spot first and then sponge it with your grease solvent. If the stain has dried on, some hand-brushing will help.

The 4 steps that good cleaners generally take to remove stains like lipstick are: First, lay^{ing} the garment over a clean absorbent cloth on a flat surface like an ironing board; second, apply^{ing} grease to the stain and rubbing it in well between the hands; third, sponging the grease and color from the fabric with carbon tetrachloride; fourth, drying rapidly either by shaking vigorously or by whisking dry with a clean, dry, soft cloth.

By the way, if your guests have a habit of leaving dabs of lipstick on your towels, you can save yourself considerable trouble by making up a few small bright red towels and labeling them "Lipstick."

Last stain question: "What's the best way to remove a spot made by milk or cream?" Says the bulletin: "Milk stains consist chiefly of protein and fat." So if the material will wash, you can remove the spot by rinsing in cold or lukewarm water followed by hot water and soap. If it won't wash, use a grease solvent.

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